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Souvenir of Black Lake

SOUVENIR
OF
BLACK LAKE

A Story of the Past and Present

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BLACK LAKE

In 1792 Alexander Macomb purchased of the State of New York all of the town of Rossie and several hundred thousand acres more for 8 pence an acre. He failed to secure a title. In 1796 the State bought the land of the Mohawk Indians. Two years later it was offered for sale at Albany and bid in by individuals, the principal buyer being Alexander Macomb. He sold a large tract to David Ogden, and he in turn sold a part of it to his brother-in-law Abijah Hammond, a merchant prince of New York City. Without seeing the land Hammond sold 28,871 acres to David Parish. It was known that Black Lake extended from the settlement near Ogdensburg to the boundary of Mr. Parish's possessions. According to tradition, on one of the expeditions the party camped on an island, calling it Tavern Island, the name it still bears today. Early in the Spring of 1810 Mr. Parish sent D. W. Church to the head of Black Lake to locate a water power. He found one on Indian River. That Summer, with the necessary assistants and building materials, he boarded a Canadian bateau, landing about sunset at what is now the village of Rossie. The next day the first house was built. For sixty years thereafter the Parish family, father and sons, spent their money freely for the development of this section. The last one of the family to reside here—a nephew of David Parish—was given the title of Baron von Seftonberg by Austria, and at once removed to that country. The town of Rossie was named by Mr. Parish after a castle in Scotland owned by his brother-in-law.

In 1812 iron ore was discovered and a furnace was constructed to smelt the ores. For years all of the ore mined was hauled to Rossie. History tells us that lead was discovered by the little daughter of

Joel Jepson, while dropping seed for her father who was planting corn. She saw a stone and hit it breaking it into cubes of a dark gray color. This was the Victoria Lead Mine. It was not opened until 1837, about eight years after its discovery. Two lead mining companies were then incorporated—the Rossie Lead Mining Co. and the Rossie Galena Co. Other lead veins were found and for nearly forty years lead mining continued to be the principal industry, employing at times large numbers of laborers. On account of the low price of lead and the high royalty claimed by the owners of the land, the mines were finally closed in 1875. Quite recently stones marked the foundation walls of a large house built on a hill overlooking the old Steamboat Landing. Back of it, at the foot of the hill, the mouth of a tunnel where lead was mined is still to be seen. Not far from that is an old well. In 1916 specimens said to be zinc were discovered. Mica, and other minerals whose names and uses have not yet been determined, as far as known, are also found. At one time a large dredge was constructed on the shore of the lake to raise peat and experiment in pressing it into briquettes for fuel. Whether the experiment was successful or not is unknown, as the dredge burned to the water's edge.

Hammond was named after Abijah Hammond. Macomb is an illustrious name. History tells us that "General Alexander Macomb was the son of a fur merchant, and was born in Detroit. He entered the army as cornet of cavalry. At the beginning of the second war for independence (1812) he was a lieutenant of engineers and adjutant general of the army. In the artillery service he distinguished himself on the Niagara frontier. He was promoted brigadier-general early in 1814 and was left in chief command in the Lake Champlain region in the Summer of that year. His victory over the British at Plattsburgh in September won for him great honors, the thanks of Congress, a gold medal, and awards

from others. On the death of General Brown in 1835 he was made general-in-chief of the armies of the United States, which position he held at the time of his death." The most popular of the many songs composed during the war, was written by Micajah Hawkins, and sung in a theatre in Albany by him in the character of a negro sailor. It was entitled "The Siege of Plattsburgh" and the last lines of each verse contain General Macomb's name. He secured "the right to establish mill dams and mills on the Harlem River. He waged unsuccessful warfare with his neighbors of lower Westchester. Twice he built a dam across the river, and twice the country folks destroyed it. Central Bridge now crosses the spot. He also built one at Spuyten Duyvil. Facing the bridge at this point he built a square stone house known as the Godwin House. It is believed that the old Philipse Inn is incorporated in this mansion. Cooper, in his novel of "Satanstoe," mentions it as the stopping place of his hero Corney Littlepage and his friend Direk. The old road curves around the Godwin House, and a short distance above is Macomb street."

There are many evidences that the Indians were numerous around Black Lake. Indian pot-holes, fortifications, arrow tips and other implements of war and chase have been found upon the islands and on the shores. At "Vagabondia" the site of a wigwam was located by the arrow tips, cooking stones and other articles unearthed. Red Jacket and the remnant of the Six Nations fought on the side of the United States in the war of 1812. They were stationed from Chipewewa Bay all along the border. Undoubtedly they were well acquainted with the country surrounding the Lake.

Lossing's Empire State tells us that "At dawn on the morning of February 22, 1813, Lieutenant Colonel McDonnell appeared on the frozen river (at Ogdensburg) with about eight hundred soldiers in two columns and pushed on to the village at separate

points. Forsythe, informed by spies of the intended assault, had prepared to receive the invaders, but he could not withstand them. It was a sort of a surprise. Some of the inhabitants were in bed, others at breakfast. They nearly all fled in consternation and after an hour of conflict in the streets, Forsythe and his troops retreated to Black Lake, eight or nine miles distant."

On one occasion the able bodied men of Rossie were ordered to pack two weeks' rations, shoulder their muskets and march to Ogdensburg. It was a "hurry call" and the trip was made in one day's march, arriving late in the evening. The men camped that night and the next day were ordered to shoulder their muskets and march home again. They gave their rations to the half starved soldiers camped there, some of whom were living on flour and water mixed and cooked over the camp fire.

In 1813 Rossie village was captured by the British, who came by the way of Morristown, and was in possession of the enemy for twenty-four hours. As the inhabitants offered no resistance, the next day the soldiers marched back to Brockville.

During the Civil War this section furnished its full quota of soldiers, including Gen. Curtis, The Hero of Fort Fisher. Col. Houghton, Col. Thos. A. Davies and others. April 26th, 1861, a meeting was called in Depeyster for the organization of a company. Newton Martin Curtis was chosen Captain, John Snyder First Lieutenant, and William Best Second Lieutenant, with a full complement of non-commissioned officers, musicians and sixty-four privates. Early after sun rise on May 2d the company met in the Town Hall. The women of Depeyster presented them with a purse of four hundred dollars in place of a flag that they had been disappointed in obtaining. The company proceeded to Ogdensburg, thence to Albany, where the Northern companies organized into a regiment. Thos. A. Davies was chosen Colonel on account of his education at West Point, and be-

cause he had served in a regiment under Colonel Zachary Taylor. He was, too, a native of this part of the country. In 1862 Colonel Davies was promoted to be Brigadier General, United States Volunteers. Although he resided in New York City, he and Mrs. Davies spent many summers at Black Lake, and "after four score years and ten he was laid to rest in the mausoleum erected on the banks of the lake about which in youth and later life, he had spent many days with rod and gun."

In the Cuban War Black Lake was represented by volunteers from either shore. One was present when the Stars and Stripes were raised at Guantanamo.

In 1817 James Munroe, President of the United States, visited Rossie as a guest of Mr. Parish.

Edward Everett Hale, the noted author, when a young man, also visited Rossie. In the volume entitled "The Man Without a Country and Other Tales" written by him, the scenes of the story "The Children of the Public" are laid in Rossie.

For years a quaint old ferry was located at what is called The Narrows at Edwardsville. It was a scow, fitted with railings on each side, and large enough to accommodate a team and wagon. The ferryman lived on an island in the middle of the Lake. This island divided the ferry into two sections. Bells were hung on standards erected on both shores. The traveler rang the bell by a long rope that dangled at the side, until the ferryman was alarmed and came over, hitching his scow along by means of a lever on a wire stretched from shore to shore. In a strong breeze the poor beasts that were obliged to cross on this ferry, weaved around on their four legs in a tipsy fashion like the bad sailors that they certainly were. A bridge now spans the Lake at this point. Not long since a steamboat named the Oswegatchie, of the type used on the Mississippi River, plied

between Rossie and Heuvelton, a distance of twenty-five miles, carrying freight and passengers. One day, in rounding the foot of Bigge Island in a high wind, it listed to one side with the heavy load and sank, those on board escaping with some difficulty. It was eventually raised and towed to Marsh's Bay, where portions of the wreck are still visible.

At the widest point—from the Rollway across Broad Lake—the distance is four miles. The waters abound with fish of various species, among which are several kinds of bass, including black bass, and white fish, pike, pickerel, cat-fish, and even the despised dog-fish, now being advocated as a food to reduce the high cost of living. Numerous varieties of the smaller fry are found in abundance.

It is said that a German naturalist spent a year at Edwardsville studying the bill-fish, a rare species that is found only here. The long sharp bills bump against the boats with a dull thud. It is a strange sight to see a great shoal of them at spawning time, crowding each other out of the water in a vain endeavor to reach the rocky shore. Futile efforts were made to capture one for a specimen at such a time. All kinds of hook and bait proved useless. Even a gaff hook failed to penetrate their armor. Attempts have been made to free the Lake of these fish, as it is believed they prey upon other species. At one time an appropriation from the State was obtained for this purpose.

Nearly all of the islands that dot Black Lake are now occupied by cottages. On Elizabeth Island the late Amasa Thornton, Tom Reed and others built what was known as the New York Club House. For several years they kept as caretaker Geo. Munk, the youngest brother of Hank Munk, the stage-coach driver of the Rockies, made famous by the story of Horace Greeley's

ride over the mountains with him. The Club House is now owned and occupied as a Summer home by a prominent New Yorker. Several of the adjacent cottages are owned by New York City people. Two of the cottages on the main land are owned by descendants of the first Dutch settlers of Manhattan—one of Annette Jans, well known to readers of history, the other of the Ryckmans, after whom it is said the Borough of Richmond (Staten Island) was named and who sold the property where the Stock Exchange now stands for the then fabulous sum of eight hundred and fifty dollars. So the past and present of Black Lake are closely interwoven with that of New York City.

The G. A. R. Club House was built on Mineral Point, opposite the Rollway, by ten members of Erwin H. Barnes Post of Gouverneur. At one time a postoffice was established there called Army, with the late Elmer Gray as Postmaster. It is now owned by a physician of Gouverneur. Morris Island and properties on the shore opposite are in the possession of the descendants of the Church family.

The village of Heuvelton is on the Oswegatchie River. Edwardsville and "The Cedars" are on the shore of the Lake, while Pope Mills is on Fish Creek, one of its tributaries. The natural scenery resembles that of the St. Lawrence River, which is, at the nearest point, only two miles distant. A fine State road connects at Gouverneur with the main auto road from New York City to the Adirondacks, making this interesting place easily accessible to tourists. The point known as The Rollway is the most frequented part of the Lake. In the autumn Lonesome Bay has its particular attractions for duck hunters. Justina Park on Bigge Island is the Mecca for camping parties. Although the Indian has passed to his Happy Hunting Ground, count-

less individuals still follow his trail in the pursuit of health and happiness on the shores of Black Lake.



THE RAINBOW PATH AND THE POT OF GOLD.

O'er hill and dale, through copse and wood,
We follow o'er a rocky road,
Where moss lined path and fern capped knoll
Beckons on to the breezy goal.
Past lowland farm, up steep "Pine Hill,"
Curving 'round by the old "Lime Kiln,"
By quiet churchyard and sleepy town,
On to the "Rollway" sloping down ;
Plodding ever in sinuous line
At last we see, in course of time,
A low point tipped with rocky reef
Stand 'gainst the sky in bold relief.
Upon its banks waves softly "swish"
Where "eel flies" lure the wily fish.
The hushed shores lie, dim pictures seen
Above the water's silvery sheen,
And snowy lillies gently rock,
Cradled in ripples that kiss the "dock."
The white ducks flit across the sky
To where the fields of wild rice lie.
And sounds a note on distant hills—
The plaintive song of whippoorwills.
Here floating islands idly sway
Upon the bosom of the bay,
While grim "Big Island" proudly stands
Embroidered 'round with rock and sands.
The white caps roll and swift sails ride
O'er crested wave with bouyant pride,
And steam yachts plow away the foam
Like glistening lines of furrowed loam.
We lie and dream in idle way
On the soft grass at close of day,
And hear the rustling of angels' wings
In the moaning song the old pine sings.
Care and sorrow, by magic wand,
Banished are from this happy land,
And life and love sweet sunshine make
Upon the borders of Black Lake.

"VAGABONDIA"

"Vagabondia," fair and still,
Nestled underneath the hill.
Sunny ripples kiss the shore,
Breezes fan it o'er and o'er,
Birches white lean o'er the edge
Clinging to the rocky ledge.
Blackbirds call, the hum of bees;
Pincy odors from the trees,
Shifting shadows, cool and sweet,
Spots where sun and shadow meet.
Where the golden lillies float,
Wavelets eddy 'round our boat;
Through the waters out and in
Dart the fish with shining fin.
On the rocks the turtle lays
Basking in the sun's warm rays;
Ferns and mosses nod at him
From Belle Island's stony rim,
Nature waved her fairy wand
O'er this dear and happy land.
"Jolly Vags," we love it well,
More than I can ever tell;
But out of mind is out of sight
To "the ships that pass at night."

MY GUM TREE CANOE.

Let not the hand of man defile
This rude reminder of the past,
But let it lie in peace awhile—
This resting place it finds at last.

The dashing waves its sides have rent,
Its emptiness an echo seems
Of days when stealthy warriors went
To rouse the settler from his dreams.

Alas! The wigwam fires are dead;
The hand that paddled it is still.
The race that fashioned it has fled
From rock bound shore and wooded hill.

Their arrows rust beneath the sod,
Their bow strings stretch beyond the skies,
And where their moccasins feet once trod,
Stranded, this old canoe now lies.

Upon the bosom of the lake
No more its battered form shall sway;
A wreck sublime—let no one take
This relic of a by-gone day.

(These verses were written and fastened to the remains of
an old Indian dug-out found sunken in one of the bays.)

"THE CEDARS."

A little church so modest
Stands on the Western shore.
The spire upon the belfry
Points heavenward evermore,
And on the Sabbath evening
Our sleeping fancies wake
As we listen to the music
Of the bells across the Lake

Calling to the fisherman,
The farmer and the sage,
To merry lads and lassies,
To men of every age.
Deep in our hearts there echoes,
The melodies they make,
As we listen to the chiming
Of the bells across the Lake.

As our boat drifts into shadows
Of the hazy twilight mist,
And softly rocks in rythm
By lazy ripples kissed,
The spell of rest steals o'er us,
Its incense we partake
As we hear the distant murmur
Of the bells across the Lake.

Oh! gentle bells of evening!
You little know your worth;
You never dream how dear you seem,
To vagabonds of earth!
We breathe in Sabbath spirit
A prayer for His dear sake,
As we hear the solemn tolling
Of the bells across the Lake.

STATE OF MACOMB, SEPTEMBER NINETEEN,
YEAR EIGHTEEN NINETY-SIX, I WEEEN.

KIND FRIEND :

Of a Summer that's only just past,
I send you this message, it may be my last,
I hope you remember our Club House down here
In this corner of Eden with its serpents, I fear
That mem'ry turns backward with lingering glance,
Life's pages of sternness and tender romance,
And gives one stray thought to this spot and the days
When we sailed, rowed and sang, and were happy always.
To the "wishing gate" small at the foot of the hills,
That we had to pass through when we went to Pope Mills,
The Lead Mine beyond and the deserted town
With its wide grassy street and its walls crumbling down,
The Point and the islands and then the Rollway,
And the echoes that hover o'er dark Lonesome Bay
And it makes the blood curdle, and oh! how we pant!
For on Anderson's island there is a real "hant" !
And have you forgotten the old ruined mill
Near Morse's sand yard, where we play at our will,
And the bridge on Fish Creek that I've sometimes leaned o'er
And wished that you'd come back to see it once more.
The cloth that you bought, warranted never to fade,
And the pretty blue pennant swift fingers soon made.
The flag staff that bore it, the wading ground near,
The lantern we rowed by dark nights, without fear,
The fine "Henley" stroke and the "chickenly" too,
They proved small assistance, 'tis certainly true ;
But 'twas labor of love, please accept it as such,
And while you're remembering don't blame us too much.
The "petticoat sails" that float crost the Bay,
(And I notice with Payne that they always are Gray.)
The trim little steam boat with swift dancing keel,
With Pnd at the engine and Ren at the wheel.
But never mind now, enough has been said,
For summer is gone and the lillies are dead.
The "phoebes" have flown to come back no more
And the ghosts of good times stalk out through the door.
We will close up the book and toss out the pen
For no one will come here to register again
And when you read this remember to send
A message of thought to

YOUR ABSENT FRIEND.

P. S.

The "critic" would say this is very bad verse
And I'm thinking myself that it could not be worse,
But 'tis penned in a hurry and but for the sake
Of our vacation days on this jolly Black Lake.

THE WATER LILY.

Chaste little blossom, fair lotus of old,
Slowly your leaves to the sun you unfold,
Resting on lily pads cool and green,
Wafting your sweetness from worlds unseen.

Rocking idly on the white-tipped wave
Pink tinted stems the clear waters lave,
Or else mirrored on the quiet lake,
Reflected loveliness shines in your wake.

Pearly petals and a heart of gold,
Incense from Heaven your chalices hold
Snowy symbol of slumber and rest,
Closing your buds when the sun's in the West.

Born in the depths of the ooze and slime
Your pure spirit soars to light in time.
Learn from the lily—rise from the sod
To the glory of the throne of God.

WOOD VIOLETS.

At eve, each day, fresh coverlids turned down, we find
To give the tender new born bud the sparkling wine
Of balmy breeze and soft-falling April shower.
Each morn some sweet new blossom bids us "good morning,"
With fragrant bloom its low woodland bed adorning,
Rising from their mossy couch in countless numbers,
Their dew-washed eyelids opening from matin slumbers.
The gentle sisterhood of blue and white and gold,
Their modest beauty to the wooing winds unfold,
Shyly they hold up for the rain their tiny cup,
And drink the fragile measure full. Delicious draught,
Such golden liquid chastest color gives when quaffed.
So they bloom on and breathe their incense up to Him
Who made them that they might perfume these hidden nooks
And scatter petals in the limpid purling brooks
That spots remote may catch the scent of violets.

WILD ROSES.

Gathering the roses, leaving each thorn,
This the trite story of youth's early morn.
Age in its weakness will miss the perfume
Wafted from the lips of the rose's pure bloom,
And sit down with tears in the armchair of time,
And mourn o'er the feebleness and the chill rime,
And the dead hopes of years flown forever and aye
And the roses that flushed in youth's merry hey-day—
In the days that are gone.

'Tis a fatal mistake in spring's warm day
If the farmer fail in the ground to lay
Seed for the harvest that ripens in Fall,
So when winter casts o'er earth its white pall
It can laugh at its grave clothes and spread good cheer
To brighten the days of the fast dying year.
So of life if we know the full glory complete,
We must toil and take daily the bitter and sweet,
And the rose and the thorn.

DOWN ON LONESOME BAY.

A SONG OF THE NORTHLAND.

When the Northland woods are brown
And the leaves are sifting down,
When the Autumn breeze thro' the evergreen trees
Hums a low sweet song.
Then I dream of the days of yore,
And I long to tread once more
The winding track that leads to a shack
Down on Lonesome Bay.

CHORUS—

Down on Lonesome Bay
Where the fields of wild rice lay,
Where the wild ducks soar
To the opposite shore,
And the bobolinks sing all day.
With my rod and gun in my boat
O'er the billowy waves I float.
Oh, I want to go back to that dear little shack
Down on Lonesome Bay.

I dwell on the 'leveenteenth floor
Far above the city's roar,
And I often sigh that I never learned to fly
To get down to earth once more.
I work all the time in a loft,
And I never can get a day off.
I ride in the "Sub" and sleep in the tub
In this lonesome town.

CITO.—

BY THE OSWEGATCHIE RIVER

A SONG OF THE NORTHLAND.

In the foothills of the mountains
Of the Adirondack chain
There runs a rippling river
With a mellow Indian name,
As a boy I played beside it
With my sweetheart by my side,
And soon I'm going back again
To claim her as my bride.

CHORUS—

By the Oswegatchie river
Where the winds blow clear and free,
There's a pretty little maiden
Who is waiting there for me.
All the world will be forgotten,
There'll be only just us two,
When she paddles down to meet me
In her little birch canoe.

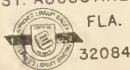
O'er the humming of the city
I can hear the robin's note,
Beyond the walls of brick and stone
I see the lillies float.
The old sweet lover's call resounds
In fancy from the shore.
I'm going home to Northland
To see it all once more.

CHORUS—



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